MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
Soil and Water Conservation Program

Quarterly Update
March 2025

STAFF UPDATES

Stacy Breesawitz

Stacy Breesawitz, coordinator in the southwest, has recently accepted the new Environmental Program Specialist position. In this new position, Stacy will manage the targeted watershed projects across the state. His focus will be to promote underutilized conservation practices and increase landowner participation of those practices. This will be in addition to working on developing and implementing a statewide nutrient reduction strategy. Congratulations Stacy!

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PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT- FIELD BORDERS N386

The N386 practice provides erosion control by slowing down water running off fields and trapping sediment and pollutants. This helps protect water quality and provides a natural wildlife habitat. The state cost-share field border practice applies around the perimeter of fields, can support or connect other buffer practices within and between fields, and provides a one-time out of production incentive not to exceed $780 per acre. Other components that are eligible for reimbursement of the practice are in addition to the critical area seeding and buffer extension incentive. If you have questions about how to offer this practice to landowners,contact your district coordinator.

CULTURAL RESOURCES REVIEW

Each practice that receives state cost-share must go through some level of cultural resource review to ensure that cultural and archeological items are not being disturbed. Of course, not all projects are elevated to a full archeological survey, but those entered into the Geoportal system do require a more extensive review. Districts need to provide a couple of key pieces of information to ensure our archeologist, S. Lee Johns, and his team are able to efficiently review those projects.

The first thing to remember is that projects are assessed in the order they're received, so it is vital that projects are planned, designed and ready to go before they are entered into the Geoportal system. This is because, to review the possible impacts of a project, Lee must know exactly where each component will go. A

project that is “estimated” provides uncertainty and requires reviewing the impact in a much larger area, which takes more time.

The second item crucial to the review process is a legible map. This means that a map containing all relevant items is provided from the state mapping tool. The maps that are generated from conservation desktop systems do not provide clear imagery that allows the survey team to adequately determine landmarks and other identifiable features of an area’s topography. The archeology team has made great progress in reducing the current backlog. Please be patient with our archeology team. On average, if all things are running smoothly, it takes the team approximately 17 weeks to complete a review. Therefore, it is imperative that everyone does their part to keep the process running as smoothly as possible.

BOARD TRAINING HOURS

In FY 24, 85 of 114 districts reported board training hours. Board member training hours are tied to several funding opportunities for districts. They’re needed in order for district staff to move up on the progression line, specifically from a DSIII to a DSVI. Performance funding is also an opportunity for all districts to receive additional funding for their district to use for any state funding-eligible expenses.

As a reminder, board training requirements are: Minimum of six meetings with a quorum and six cumulative hours of approved training obtained by the board in the last 12-month period for the progression line, or during the previous FY for performance funding. The FY 24 training conference was the largest training opportunity reported for board members. Other opportunities that board members could log as training hours include training from your district coordinator at a monthly board meeting.

If your district has specific topics that they would be interested in learning more about reach out to your district coordinator. Examples of topics would include a short 15- to 30-minute training on specific cost-share practices, the hiring process and the initial allocations versus the supplemental allocation versus the early allocation.

RESOLUTION PROCESS

THE RESOLUTION PASSED… SO NOW WHAT? Each November, the Missouri Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts hosts its annual training conference for soil and water district staff, board members and partner agencies. This conference includes the association’s business meeting, during which districts have the opportunity to present resolutions for consideration. Resolutions are then voted on, and if passed by the majority of the voting body, the resolutions are provided to the program office.

The program presents the resolutions to the Soil and Water Districts Commission, which then provides guidance to the program about how to proceed.

Typically, the commission suggests that resolutions be presented to either the District Operations and Program Delivery Committee or the Cost-share Practices Committee. These committees consist of district staff, board members, partner agencies and program staff. After committee discussion, if the resolution in question needs commission approval, the program office takes their recommendation to a Soil and Water Districts Commission meeting for consideration. It is important to remember that not all resolutions result in policy change.

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT

Atchison County Soil and Water Conservation District has tried to provide the most assistance possible to our landowners. In recent years, we've spent around $1 million in cost-share funding. For FY25, we are projected to spend over $1.3 million. We attribute this to teamwork. Both of our technicians, Justin Chitwood and Josie Begemann, started in January 2024 and by Nov. 1, they had already obligated over $1 million. This was a huge accomplishment, as normally our prime construction season starts in October. Our county lost a SWCD technician and a highly seasoned NRCS technician to retirement in March and July, respectively, so we have leaned on another NRCS technician in our FOSA, Savannah Bushman, to help train the techs. Our FOSA prides itself on being able to work outside our county lines if someone is in need of extra training or help. Communication is key whether it is among staff or with landowners, contractors and board members. This definitely helps things run smoother!

Jessica Shefferd, has been with the SWCD for six years, as both the district manager and a shared employee with Nodaway County. In addition to her main role, she is an employee association representative and member of the NRCS morale committee. Jessica worked with Nodaway County to receive an NRCS grant for the FOSA, which allowed the districts to host three workshops in the three counties for the next three years. This year was the start of the grant where Atchison, Nodaway and Holt counties hosted the workshops.

The first workshop was a contractor workshop, held in Holt County. This workshop helped to keep the contractors and office staff on the same page, inform contractors of any changes occurring and provides an opportunity to ask questions. Area staff were on hand to help answer those questions.

The next workshop was hosted in Nodaway County and focused on soil health. This was a good training opportunity for office staff and landowners who may have wanted to learn more about soil health concepts and how to improve the soil. The rainfall simulator helped to demonstrate this. 4R Nutrients Management was also presented as a pilot program in Nodaway County.

The third workshop was The Women in Ag event, which was hosted in Atchison County. This event had the best attendance turnout, with over 70 attendees, and featured booths of local small businesses and speakers. The first speaker did an interactive Tai Chi demonstration and the second was a presentation from P.H.A.R.M. Dog, who trains service and farm dogs for farmers with disabilities. All team members are looking forward to these workshops rotating and hosting a different one in their county next year.